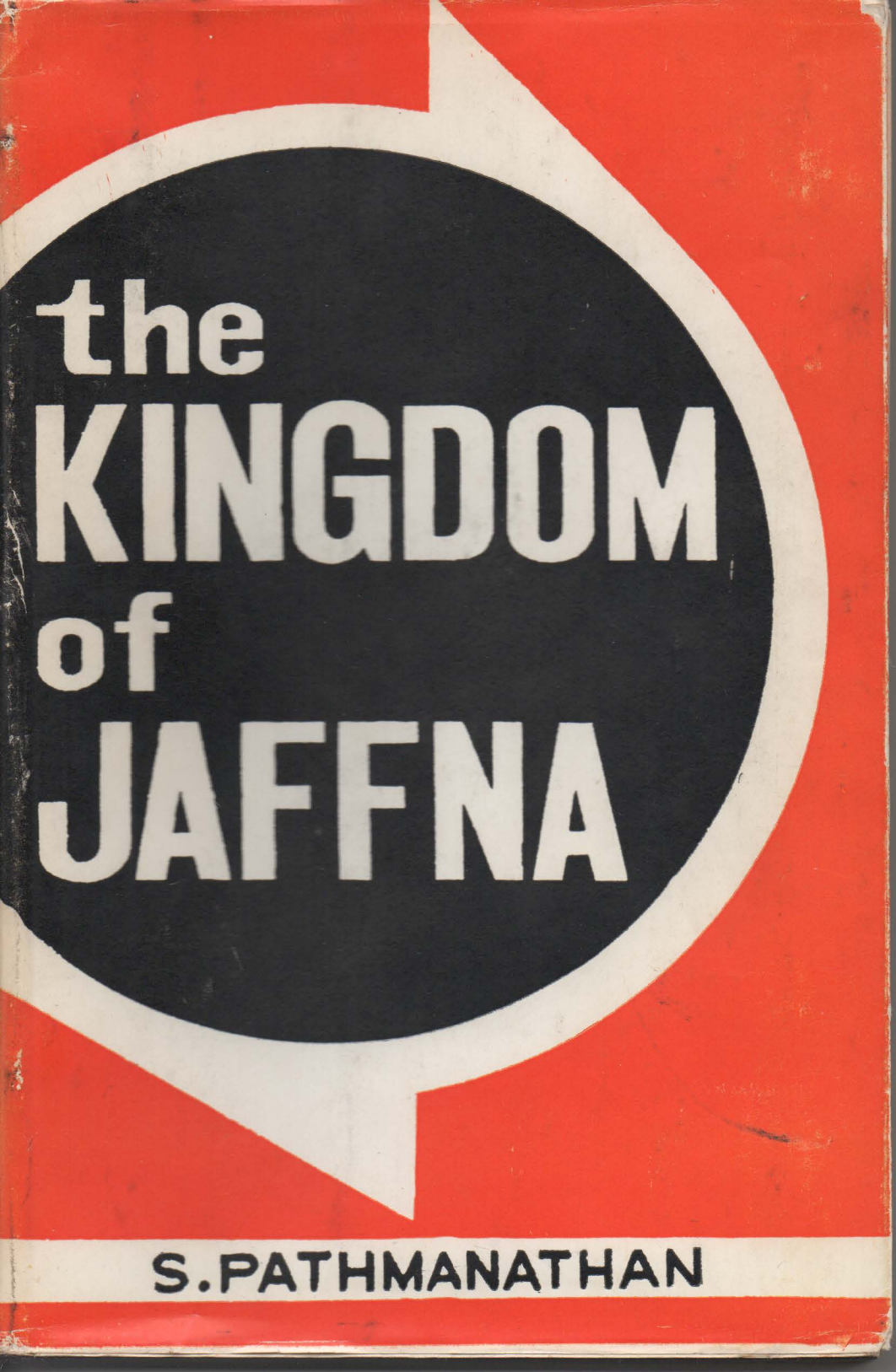
the
KINGDOM
of
JAFFNA
S.PATHMANATHAN

With best compliments

To Sambi

The descendant of an
Ancient lone of Kings
who Welded the Tamils of
Ceylon into a nation

S. Pathmanathan

1/9/79.

THE

KINGDOM OF JAFFNA

PART I

(CIRCA A. D. 1250 - 1450)

By

S. PATHMANATHAN

Published by

Arul M. Rajendran

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Preface

In this book the political history of the Kingdom of Jaffna since its beginnings to the mid-fifteenth century has been reconstructed with the aid of archaeological and literary sources. This Kingdom was referred to variously as Yāḷppāṇam, Yāḷppāṇatēcam and Yāḷppāṇappaṭṭiṇam in local and Indian Tamil literature and inscriptions of the contemporary and later periods. It was known as Yāpāpaṭuna or Demaḷa-patnam to medieval Sinhalese literary tradition. The Portuguese administrators and chroniclers refer to it as Jaffnapatão and in the period of Dutch rule it was known as Jaffnapatnam.

The origins and development of the Kingdom of Jaffna and the relations which its rulers, the Ārya cakravarttis, had with contemporary South Indian and Sinhalese kings have been examined in nine (IV - XII) Chapters of this book. The origins and development of the Vanni principalities some of which were included within the Kingdom of Jaffna have also been examined in considerable detail. The historical traditions recorded in the local Tamil chronicles have been examined here in a historical setting and interpretatively analysed.

The first three chapters dealing with the history of the Tamils in the island from Proto-historic times to the thirteenth century have been included here with a view to provide a background that would enable the reader to have a better understanding of the principal theme of this book. Interesting and valuable information pertaining to the Megalithic culture in Sri Lanka has been obtained since the first chapter has been printed and now it is estimated by archaeologists who conducted recent excavations that Megalithic urn-burials could be unearthed in thousands in the island's western littoral. Archaeological research in the future may therefore show that the extent of Dravidian penetration into the island during the Proto-historic and early historic periods was much greater than has been recognized in this book. In the second and third chapters the scope of our enquiry has been considerably enlarged by the progress made in Tamil epigraphic studies in the recent past.

The major part of this book (Chapters IV - XII) is based on a study originally conceived as a Ph.D. dissertation for the school of Oriental and African studies, University of London. That study was undertaken under the supervision of Professor J. G. de Casparis, Reader in South and South East Asian History in the University of London. I am indebted to him for his learned and stimulating guidance which enabled me to complete that study. His wide experience, unrivalled knowledgeof the pre-colonial history of Sri Lanka, and criticisms and comments helped me immensely.

I am beholden to Dr. John. R. Marr of the Department of South Asia, S. O. A. S., who was kind enough to read the drafts of several chapters of the original study and make valuable suggestions. His help was a great asset in interpreting obscure passages and expressions in Tamil literature and medieval inscriptions.

I remain indebted to Professor K. W. Goonewardene who helped me to obtain probationary study leave for post-graduate training in London and to Drs. T.Kandiah and V.Kanapathypillai who read the drafts of some of the chapters of this book and made some useful comments and criticisms. I am obliged to Mr. James T. Rutnam and Vidwan F.X.C. Nadarajah who lent me some valuable texts from their libraries for the preparation of this study. I would like to express my thanks to the staff of the libraries of the S.O.A.S., the British Museum and the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Arul Rajendran who took a personal interest in this work, made all arrangements for its publication and patiently read the proofs of each chapter several times. If not for his labours this book would never have come out of the Press.

The history of the Kingdom of Jaffna from 1467 to the Portuguese conquest in the seventeenth century will be dealt with in the sequel in part II of this book.

S. Pathmanathan.

Peradeniya Campus
University of Sri Lanka
Peradeniya
Sri Lanka.

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Abbreviations

ARE	Annual Report on Epigraphy. (Madras Epigraphical Reports, Southern Circle, Madras Government)
ASSI	Archaeological Survey of Southern India
CALR	Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register
Cc	Cekarācacēkaram
Ccm	Cekarācacēkaramālai
CHJ	Ceylon Historical Journal
CJHSS	Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies
CTI	Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions
CV	Cūḷavamsa
EI	Epigraphia India
ET	Epigraphia Tamilica
EZ	Epigraphia Zeylanica
IATR	International Association of Tamil Research
IPS	Inscriptions of the Pudukoṭṭai State
JRASCB	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch
KK	Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu
KM	Kailāyamālai
KS	Kokila sandesaya
MM	Maṭṭakkalappu Mānmiyam
MTL	Tamil Lexicon, Madras
MV	Mahāvamsa
NKS	Nikāya Sangrahaya
PJV	Pūjāvaliya
PKS	Parakumba Sirita
RJV	Rājāvaliya
SII	South Indian Inscriptions
TKP	Tāksiṇa Kailāca Purānam
UCHC	University of Ceylon History of Ceylon
UCR	University of Ceylon Review
VP	Vaiyāpāṭal
Vv	Verses
YVM	Yālppāṇa Vaipavamālai
YVV	Yālppāṇa Vaipava Vimarcanam

Note on Transliteration and Diacritical marks

In the transliteration of words and expressions in Oriental languages the standard practice followed by historians and epigraphists is adopted here except in rare cases where it is not possible to do so. The distinction between ந and ன has not, however, been maintained in the transliteration; both letters are represented by n.

In the case of Tamil letters the long vowels, ஆ, ஈ, ஊ, ஏ and ஓ are transliterated respectively as ā, ī, ū, ē, and ō. The following also may be noted: k stands for க்; c for ச்; ṭ for ட்; ṟ for ற்; ḷ for ள்; ḻ for ழ்; ṇ for ண்; ṉ for ன் and ñ for ஞ்;

The Tamil passages quoted in the text have been, with a few exceptions, translated or transliterated.

Errata

Page	Error	Correction
16	with early stages	with the early stages
45	Srī Makarināṭalvān	Srī Mukarināṭāḷvān
49	the chief emporia	the chief emporium
59	hymns called Tirumuṟai were placed	hymns called Tirumuṟai was placed
64	Navel expedition	naval expedition
65	twenty-eight chapters	eighteen chapters
70	some of Nānādesis	some of the Nānādesis
86	The two successors of Vijayabāhu and Gajabāhu II	The two successors of Vijayabāhu, Vikramabāhu and Gajabāhu II,
	Hindu inscriptions	Hindu institutions
92	has passed away	have passed away
94	Viramabāhu	Vikramabāhu
104	Mahga	Māgha
107	than that to the slab inscription	than that of the slab inscription
150	in the legible position of it	in the legible portion of it
225	Vikrama Pāṇday	Vikrama Pāṇḍya
229	Maṇava	Maṇavai
232	Māṇavai	Maṇavai
	some inscription	some inscriptions
261	ary the main political events	are the main political events
	literarē sources	literary sources
262	**Giar sandesa**	**Girā sandesa**
	in the source that were available to Valentijn	in the sources that were available to Valentijn
267	compring	comprising
270	Queyros	Queyroz
279	thirty-eight years	Thirty-eighth year
281	during is period	during this period

Publisher's Note

This little volume forms Part I of the revised and enlarged version of Dr. S. Pathmanathan's doctoral thesis written in 1969. His original thesis had remained in manuscript for want of a publisher.

Having come to know of this in 1974, I made an appeal through the Press for public donations or returnable contributions towards its publication. A former Senator and Attorney-at-law of Mallakam Mr. S. Nadarajah and Dr. S. Rajaratnam of Prasanthi Dispensary, Thalayali, Kokuvil, responded with donations of Rs. 100 and Rs. 50 respectively. There was no further response until Mr. K. Subramaniam of No. 23, Galle Road, Bambalapitiya, Colombo, and of Tellippalai, gave me the courage to launch on the venture with a contribution of Rs. 2000. I was further encouraged by a donation of Rs. 1,500 from a Tamil Association in London. The balance money required for the purpose was shared by my three sisters. I express my gratitude to all of them.

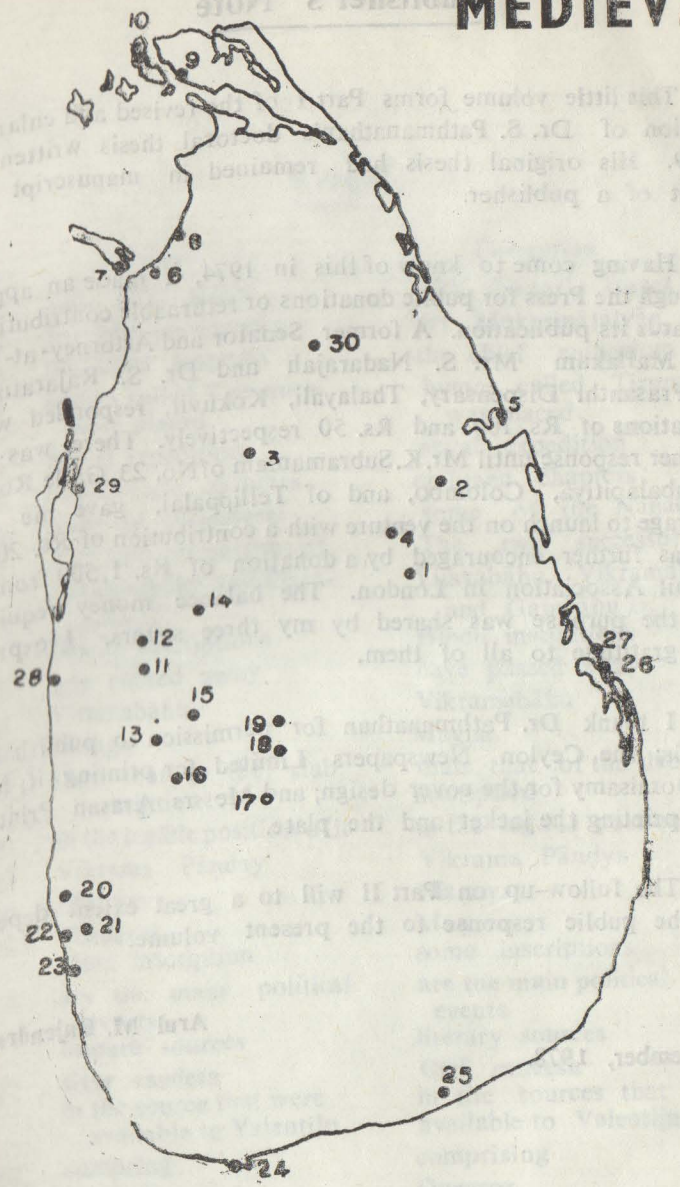
I thank Dr. Pathmanathan for permission to publish his thesis; the Ceylon Newspapers Limited for printing it; Mr. S. Doraisamy for the cover design; and Messrs Arasan Printers for printing the jacket and the plate.

The follow-up on Part II will to a great extent depend on the public response to the present volume.

Arul M. Rajendran.

September, 1978.

MEDIEVAL



SRI LANKA

1. Polonnaruwa.
2. Kantaḷāy.
3. Anurādhapura.
4. Madirigiriya.
5. Trincomalee.
6. Matōṭṭam.
7. Mannar.
8. Iluppaikatavai.
9. Jaffna. (Ciṅkai nakar)
10. Urātturāi. (Kayts)
11. Parākramapura.
12. Mākal. (Magalla)
13. Dambadeniya.
14. Yapahuwa.
15. Kurunagala.
16. Ḍedigama.
17. Gampola.
18. Sengadagala.
19. Matale.
20. Kotte.
21. Raygama.
22. Panadura.
23. Kalutara.
24. Devinuvara.
25. Māgama.
26. Batticaloa. (Maṭṭakaḷappu)
27. Erāvūr.
28. Chilaw.
29. Puttalam.
30. Padaviya

The author

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Dr. Pathmanathan was awarded a British Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellowship for 1978 – 1979 for a comaprative study of Political and Social institutions of Sri Lanka and Sonth India tenable at S. O. A. S., University of London.

Dr. Pathmanathan who is the author of several research papers, both in English and Tamil, had his secondary education at Jaffna College, Vaddukoddai.

INTRODUCTION

The Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka who constitute about thirty percent of the island's population could broadly be divided into three principal groups: (1) 'The Ceylon Tamils' (2) The Tamils in the central region of the island and (3) the Muslims.[1] The Tamil population in the central parts of the island emerged as a result of the opening up of coffee, tea and rubber plantations by the British colonial government in the nineteenth century. Most of the 'Indian Tamils' have been and are still employed as estate workers and have provided 'cheap labour' in the plantation sector of the economy. They have perhaps remained isolated from the mainstream of political and social life in the country owing to certain constraints imposed on them.

The rise of Muslim settlements in several parts of Sri Lanka is linked up with the history of the island's trade, internal and external. By the tenth century the Muslim Arabs had acquired a foothold in Malabar from where they extended their activities all over the Coromandel. From the late thirteenth century they dominated the trade of the Indo-Ceylon straits. Soon they spread to the ports of Sri Lanka in increasing numbers and gradually penetrated into the interior of the island. By the mid-

1. According to the latest census report the Tamil speaking population consists of:

Ceylon Tamils	—	1 415,567
Indian Tamils	—	1 195,368
Ceylon Moors	—	824.291
Indian Moors	—	29,416
Malays (mostly bilingual)	—	41,615
		3,506,257

See *Census of Population, 1971, Preliminary Release No I, June* 1972.

fourteenth century there were many Muslim settlements around the ports on the western and southwestern coasts of the island. The Portuguese who came to the island in the early sixteenth century found the Muslims in control of most of its trade.

In modern times the Muslims are found in most of the towns in Sri Lanka and a majority of them are concentrated along the western and eastern coasts. They are of diverse origins like the Sinhalese and Tamils. Their numbers include Malays and even some who are probably the descendants of traders who had come from the Arab lands of West Asia and North Africa. A very large number of them are, however, the descendants of traders from Malabar and the Coromandel and are therefore Tamil speaking.[2] Yet, the Muslims claim a separate identity — an identity based on religion. They have developed a social organization and attitudes that are in some ways distinctive to them.

The 'Ceylon Tamils' whose history forms the subject of this work have influenced the pattern of social and cultural evolution in Sri Lanka at different stages and in varying degrees. They have been concentrated from medieval times in the areas that correspond to the Northern and Eastern provinces and in the western littoral from the north up to Chilaw. A section of the Tamils in Jaffna began to spread out into Colombo and other towns in the western and central parts of the island as a result of being employed in government service and the mercantile sector after the administrative unification of the whole island by the British during the nineteenth century.

The Tamils have lived in Sri Lanka from pre-Christian times and Sinhalese-Tamil relations is a favourite theme in certain sections of the **Mahāvaṃsa** and the **Cūḷavaṃsa** which

2. Malayāḷam the language of the people of Kēraḷa, branched off from Tamil and became a separate language from the thirteenth century onward. The people, who (both Hindus and Muslims) immigrated in considerable numbers from the Malabar Coast in South India to Sri Lanka in the period before the fourteenth century, have remained Tamil speaking.

record Sinhalese traditional history. The two communities are differentiated by the languages they speak and from medieval times also by religion. Sinhalese which is mainly Indo-Aryan in vocabulary evolved in Sri Lanka and is not spoken anywhere outside the island. Although it is derived from Prākrit, which was introduced into the island from India in pre-Christian times it is not an Indian language. Tamil which belongs to the Dravidian group of languages concentrated mainly in the southern states of India had developed in South India before the Christian era. It is spoken by several millions there and is one of the major Indian languages.

During the early centuries of the Christian era Buddhism which had spread almost over the entire island promoted a sort of cultural homogeneity. The Tamils and other Dravidians who followed Buddhism and had come under the influence of the cultural tradition transmitted by Prākrit seem to have been absorbed within the framework of this cultural homogeneity. But the Tamils who came to the island in increasing numbers from the period of Pallava-Pāṇḍya supremacy in South India which coincided with the Hindu revivalism there tended to remain Hindu. They were not easily absorbed into the Buddhist Sinhalese population as before. From the seventh century onwards, the Tamils were an important element in the cultural, political and military affairs of the country.

Since the period of Cōḷa rule in the eleventh century they developed as a separate community with an identity of their own. The remains of several Hindu temples constructed mainly in the Cōḷa style of architecture, the substantial number of bronzes and other icons unearthed within the premises of ruined temples and the evidence from Tamil inscriptions set up at several localities which were of political, strategic and commercial importance show that the Tamils were a prosperous and influential element in society during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[3] The contents of the Tamil inscriptions set up during this period

3. See, Chapter II

and the art forms found in the architectural and iconographic remains reveal that their cultural and social institutions were almost entirely a replica of those in South India. During the Polonnaruwa period (1070—1215) the Sinhalese and Tamils lived together as the subjects of a monarchy which always claimed and at times had sovereignty over the whole island. Some rulers of this period were of Tamil descent in the male line. The Sinhalese court had matrimonial links with the Pāṇḍyas, one of the two main Tamil dynasties in India. Many Tamils held high ranks at the court and in the army and the administration.[4]

After the conquest of a large part of the country by Māgha of Kalinga in A.D. 1215 the kingdom of Polonnaruwa disintegrated. All vestiges of political unity in the island disappeared. The events of the thirteenth century, especially those that followed Māgha's invasion, had far-reaching effects. The most notable among them was the development of two kingdoms — Jaffna and Dambadeniya, and a number of autonomous or independent chieftaincies collectively known as the Vanni. Of the two kingdoms one was Tamil and the other was Sinhalese while most of the chieftaincies were under the authority of Tamil feudal chiefs called vanniyar.[5] The kingdom of Jaffna had as its nucleus **Uttaradesa**,[6] the northern division of the old principality of Rajarata, and corresponded to the Tamil districts in the northern part of the island.

Another development that followed the fall of Polonnaruwa was the eventual abandonment of the irrigation works of the north - central plain in the dry zone. The once fertile and prosperous north-central plain which supported

4. See, Chapter III
5. S. Pathmanathan, 'Feudal Polity in Medieval Ceylon: An examination of the Chieftaincies of the Vanni' *CJHSS, Vol. II (New Series) No. 2 (July—December 1972) pp.* 118 — 130.
6. *Uttaradesa* was the northern division of Rajarata which was one of the three major units into which the entire island was divided for administrative purposes under the Sinhalese monarchy.

a prosperous society reverted to jungle and became an effective barrier between the Sinhalese and Tamil kingdoms which for the most part developed in isolation.

The origins of the Tamil kingdom in the northernmost parts of Sri Lanka may therefore be traced from the time of Māgha who occupied Polonnaruwa mainly with the support of Dravidian armies and ruled Rajarata as a separate kingdom for a period of forty years. After his demise around 1255 the Jāvakas under the leadership of Candrabhānu secured power over most of the territories that were previously under Māgha, mainly with the support of armies raised from the Tamil kingdoms in South India. Candrabhānu soon came under the influence of the rising Pāṇḍya power in the Tamil country. He was reduced to the position of a vassal. Not many years later when Candrabhānu refused to send tribute the Pāṇḍyas invaded his kingdom, defeated him in battle and the king was killed.[7] Towards the end of the thirteenth century Ārya cakravartti, a chieftain from the Pāṇḍya kingdom acquired authority over the kingdom in the northern part of the island.[8] His descendants continued to rule over it until the Portuguese conquered it in the early seventeenth century.

The Ārya cakravarttis reorganized the administration and under them the Tamil kingdom became stronger and more prosperous. It aspired for and even attained for a brief period some sort of supremacy over the central highlands and the south western lowlands. Under the Ārya cakravarttis Jaffna had close political, cultural and commercial links with the kingdoms of South India. Pāṇḍya and Vijayanagara influences over Jaffna were strongly felt in successive stages. The rulers of Vijayanagara claimed and at times even obtained tribute from the rulers of

7. Candrabhānu was an invader who came from Tambralinga in the Malay peninsula. See Amaradasa Liyanagamage, *The Decline of Polonnaruwa and the Rise of Dambadeniya,* (Colombo, 1968) pp. 133-134.
8. S. Pathmanathan, *The Kingdom of Jaffna* (The Ceylon Institute of Tamil Studies, publication No. 1, 1974), pp. 14–17.

Jaffna since the late fourteenth century. After the decline of Vijayanagara Jaffna came under the influence of Tanjore and Madurai which were two of the successor states of that empire,

In the fifteenth century Sinhalese political power revived, after a long period of decline, under Parakramabahu VI of Kotte. He aspired to become the ruler of the whole island. When his armies overran Jaffna, the Tamil ruler Kanakacūriya Ciṅkaiyāriyan fled to India. Thereafter, Jaffna was administered for a period of seventeen years by Sapumal, the adopted son and general of Parākramabāhu who had conducted the campaigns that led to its conquest. When Sapumal left for Kotte to secure the throne of that kingdom on the death of Parākramabāhu, the king of Jaffna returned from exile and re-established his power in Jaffna with the help of some of the chieftains in the Tamil country.

The successors of Kanakacūriya Ciṅkaiyāriyan like their contemporary Sinhalese rulers, had to confront the Portuguese whose power assumed menacing proportions and ultimately threatened the existence of their kingdom. Caṅkili I who realized the gravity of the threat posed by the Portuguese power at times supported the Sinhalese rulers in their wars against the Portuguese. With support from Vijayanagara feudatories in South India he successfully resisted Portuguese pressures and managed to keep them at bay until the very end of his reign. A formidable invasion of Jaffna organized and led by the Portuguese Viceroy in Goa, Don Constantino de Braganca in 1560, ended in failure [9] The only Portuguese gain was the capture of the island of Mannar which became a foothold from where they could organize expeditions against Jaffna whenever they found it convenient and desirable. The Portuguese captain of Mannar soon began to play the role of a king maker in Jaffna.

9. Chandra Richard de Silva, *The Portuguese in Ceylon 1617–1638*. (H. W. Cave & Co , Colombo, 1972) p. 5.

After the death of Caṅkili the threat of Portuguese power became greater and his successors did not have the power and ability to resist them. The decline of royal power and the dissensions among the nobility were advantageous to the Portuguese who lost no time in exploiting the situation to secure their ends. Initially their policy was, as in the Sinhalese kingdoms, one of supporting pliant rulers who would meet their demands in respect of Christianity and commerce. In course of time such a policy was not found to be a feasible one. The Portuguese demands were so exacting and irksome even to a ruler who was their virtual protege. The concessions granted to the Portuguese by successive rulers were resented by the inhabitants the bulk of whom were Hindus and made the rulers unpopular. Besides, Portuguese activities in Jaffna amounted to a challenge to the power of the Nayak of Tanjore who claimed overlordship over Jaffna. When in the 1560's the captain of Mannar found himself able to play the role of king-maker in Jaffna it was not long before the new ruler found himself obliged to oppose the Portuguese to protect his own interests and to maintain the loyalty of the Hindu subjects. Periyapillai Chegarāja cekaram who was installed by the Portuguese in 1570 later attacked Mannar with aid of forces from Tanjore.[10] Another king Puvirāja Paṇḍāram Pararājaciṅkam attacked Mannar with the support from the Kunjalis, the admirals of the **Zamorin** of Calicut. The attack proved to be unsuccessful and the Portuguese retaliated by invading Jaffna. The king was defeated and killed together with his son and the commander-in-chief of his forces[11]. The Portuguese then installed as king Etirmannaciṅkam, the son of the previous king. The new ruler was bound, by a treaty concluded in 1591, to acknowledge the king of Portugal as his suzerain and pay a substantial portion of his

10. *ibid.* p 6; Vriddhagirison, *The Nayaks of Tanjore* (Annamalainagar, 1942) p. 78.

11. *The Portuguese in Ceylon, 1617–1638*, p. 7.

revenues as tribute.[12] The new ruler, like some of his predecessors, found that the Portuguese interests conflicted with those of his kingdom and could satisfy neither the Portuguese nor his people who disliked the Portuguese especially on account of their religious activities. As the Portuguese found the ruler vacillating in his support to them they planned for his deposition. Affairs in Jaffna ultimately developed into a confrontation between the Portuguese and the Nayak of Tanjore. In 1620 the last ruler of Jaffna, Cańkili II, was captured and the kingdom was occupied by the Portuguese. The latter were able to suppress local opposition and establish their power in Jaffna by 1621 only after decisively beating the Nayak's forces on land and sea.

The conquest of Jaffna by the Portuguese under Constantine de Sa enabled them to round off their control of the maritime areas of the island. The kingdom of Kandy in the centre of the island became more isolated and was more exposed than ever to Portuguese attack. After their conquest of Jaffna the Portuguese attained a position of supremacy in the Indo-Ceylon straits and could easily interrupt communications and commerce between Kandy and the kingdoms of South India. Besides the Portuguese acquired control over the pearl fisheries in the Gulf of Mannar and the lucrative trade between Jaffna and South India.

The Portuguese conquest severed the political and cultural contacts between the Tamils of Sri Lanka and South India. Hinduism suffered a sharp decline in Jaffna and almost all Hindu institutions were destroyed by the new rulers. Jaffna became a fertile field for proselytization which was vigorously carried out by Portuguese missionary organizations with the support of the colonial government.

The Portuguese adopted the traditional system of administration and the old territorial divisions. They also

12. The author is indebted to Dr. C. R. de Silva who supplied him the information about this treaty gathered from Portuguese manuscripts in Lisbon.

retained the traditional ranks in the administration. Under the Dutch Jaffnapatnam, which was one of the three divisions of the Dutch possessions in Sri Lanka, included almost all the territories that were under the kings of Jaffna.

After the fall of Jaffna, centres of Tamil political power lingered on in the Vanni. The principalities of the Vanni which were spread over a large part of the dry zone, had emerged as seen earlier, by the thirteenth century. The principalities in the territory stretching from the Gulf of Mannar to Trincomalee were subject to the control of the kings of Jaffna. The Vanniyar of Trincomalee were also under the influence of Jaffna until the sixteenth century. Thereafter, when the eastern littoral assumed a new importance as a result of European activities in the region the kings of Kandy brought the Vanniyar of Trincomalee and Batticaloa under their effective control. Until then many of the Tamil Vanniyars in the eastern littoral enjoyed a great measure of independence and the principalities under their rule had remained isolated from the politics of the rest of the island. The Vanniyar of Puttalam, who, like most of the chieftains of Batticaloa, were Mukkuvars of Malabar extraction, owed allegiance to the king of Kotte since the reign of Parakramabahu VI. The principalities on the west and east coasts, however, succumbed to the Portuguese and the Dutch in successive stages during the seventeenth century.

The situation in the Vanni lands of Jaffnapatnam was altogether different. The seven Vanni principalities of 'Jaffnapatnam' were administered by feudal chieftains who held the rank of Vanniyar. They were mostly the descendants of warriors who conquered the Vanni lands under the early kings of Jaffna. They received their investiture from the rulers of Jaffna to whom they paid annual tribute. The administration of their principalities was under their charge. All the Vanniyar in the kingdom had to attend the ceremony of **paresse** held bi-annually in Jaffna.

After their conquest of Jaffna the Portuguese and later the Dutch claimed tribute and allegiance from the chiefs of the Vanni. They were reluctant to mobilise sufficient military resources for the conquest of the Vanni lands because of their involvement in other areas which from their point of view were of greater importance. From their centres of feudal power in the remote and jungle-covered lands the Vanniyars developed and sustained a spirit of local independence against the two successive European colonial powers, the Portuguese and the Dutch. Tradition and legend perpetuate the memory of the feats of Kailāyavanniyan, Nallamāppāṇan and Paṇṭāravanniyan who led, at different times, the movements of resistance. Whenever the colonial government of Jaffnapatnam endeavoured to force them into submission the Vanniyars sank their differences and took concerted measures to safeguard their common interests. In such instances, the leadership fell on the chieftain of Panaṅkāmam which was the largest and the most important of the principalities in the Vanni. The Dutch who had dealings with these chieftains for a period of nearly one and a half centuries have left substantial accounts of the conditions in the Vanni. The Dutch government finally decided to crush the power of the Vanniyars and their principalities were brought under the direct rule of the Dutch authorities in Jaffna around 1780.

In the kingdom of Jaffna and the principalities of the Vanni the Ceylon Tamils have developed a social structure and cultural traditions which were in many ways distinctive. The **Tecavaḻamai** the collection of customary laws, codified and applied by the Dutch in the early eighteenth century, embodies the traditions and values which were crystallized under the Tamil kings of Jaffna. The most notable feature of Tamil society in the kingdom of Jaffna was the fusion of the matriarchal and patriarchal forms of social organization. In the principalities of the Mukkuvar of Puttalam and Batticaloa, the matriarchal system continued to be predominant until recent times.

Jaffna became a stronghold of the orthodox form of Saivite Hinduism. This was largely due to the predominance of the agricultural classes which had imbibed the orthodox traditions of Hinduism to a larger extent than any other social group, with the exception of the Brahmins. Numerous temples were constructed and supported in various parts of Jaffna and in the different principalities of the Vanni. Tirukketīsvaram at Māntai and Koṇēsvaram at Trincomalee were perhaps the most outstanding, the rest being of modest proportions. In the eastern littoral the traditions of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata have exerted the dominant cultural influences. The Pattini cult based on the ancient Tamil work, **Cilappatikāram** was very popular among the Tamils of the east coast. The Tamils of Batticaloa have developed and preserved a variety of folk literature which is of high literary merit and has many distinctive features.

Despite a long period of colonial rule covering nearly four and a half centuries the social structure and the cultural heritage developed by the Tamils in the kingdom of Jaffna and the principalities of the Vanni have survived although they have undergone transformation in varying degrees due to the impact of extraneous influences and adjustments.

I

The Tamils in the Anuradhapura Kingdom

The history of the Tamils in ancient Sri Lanka could be reconstructed only in bare outline. The available archaeological evidence being scanty and limited the **Mahāvaṃsa** and the **Cūḷavaṃsa** are the principal sources of information. Political history and Budhism are the two major themes of these chronicles. They record Sinhalese traditional history and in works of that nature one cannot expect detailed information on Tamil history. Yet, in their accounts of dynastic history, the **Māhavaṃsa** and the **Cūḷavaṃsa** refer to Tamils who were of importance in politics and society. Such references in the chronicles provide the basic chronological framework for any study of the Tamils in Ancient Ceylon. The scope of a study of this nature will remain narrow and limited until the major prehistoric and protohistoric sites in the island are systematically excavated and the artefacts found there are analysed scientifically. Until and unless such work is done the beginnings of civilization in Sri Lanka and the date of the earliest Dravidian settlements in the island will remain controversial matters.

Sri Lanka, situated in the centre of the Indian Ocean and in close proximity to the Indian subcontinent was under strong Indian influences from prehistoric times. As South India and Sri Lanka formed one trading unit and because Sri Lanka was often brought within the sphere of South Indian political influence Tamil Nāṭu and Keraḷa were of special singnificance in the spread of Indian culture to Sri Lanka.

The ancestors of a vast majority of Ceylonese are of Indian origin and most of them seem to have come to the island from the southern parts of India. Race movements of the prehistoric age and the political changes and upheavals of the Christian era in India had their impact on Sri Lanka. They led to periodic migrations of Indians of different racial strains, in considerable numbers to the island. Besides, the impressions of seamen and travellers' tales sustained a belief among Indians that Lanka was a marvellous land of promise and plenty. Her wealth in pearls, gems, spices, and other natural products became legendary. Sri Lanka attracted to her shores all sorts of people—adventurers in quest of land and wealth, warriors, traders, seamen and divers mainly from the Malabar and Coromandel coasts.

Periodic migrations from India resulted in the growth of settlements in different localities in the island. Prehistoric archaeological remains suggest that the neolithic stage of civilization spread to the island from South India.[1] The two major communities of prehistoric Sri Lanka, the Nāgas and the Veddas, seem to have entered the island from South India. The affinities the Nagas had with the Tamils and other groups of Dravidians are not precisely known but the Veddas are considered as the lineal descendants in culture as well as in physique of the early Dravidian jungle tribes of India[2].

In the course of the four centuries prior to the Christian era Sri Lanka was brought within the mainstream of Indian culture. Several Brahmins, Ājivikas, Jains and Buddhists

1. 'It is the belief among prehistorians that man did not evolve in Ceylon but on the other hand that he arrived in the island from the main continent of India. No skeletal remains of prehistoric man have come to light'. See N. D. Wijesekera, *The People of Ceylon*, 2nd. edition (Colombo 1965) p. 25.

2. Seligmanns assert: 'In conclusion we may state our opinion of the relationship of the Veddas to the jungle tribes of India and to the civilized races of Ceylon. We regard them as part of the same race as the so-called jungle tribes of Southern India.' C. G. Seligmann and Brenda Seligmann, *The Veddas* (*Osterhout, N. B. The Netherlands*) pp. 416, 422.

came to the island and their activities led to the diffusion of ideas and traditions that were developed in the Magadhan empire in India.[3] The rise of Buddhism as the dominant religion in the island laid the foundation of the synthetic proto-Sinhalese culture. The spread of Buddhism among the various communities in different levels of development led to their integration. With the adoption of Prākrit, the language of Buddhism, they tended to become Indo-Aryan in speech. The Indian cultural and religious heritage transmitted through Buddhism and Prākrit were thoroughly assimilated and became the basis of Sinhalese identity.[4]

The pace of political and cultural developments among the Sinhalese was accelerated by Buddhism. The Magadhan Prākrit which was the language of early Buddhist literature exerted a profound influence on society and it led to the development of the Sinhalese language. All early stone inscriptions in the island were in Prākrit and were indited in Brāhmi characters of the Asokan type. Monarchy as developed by the Sinhalese was basically a replica of the

3. Several pre-Christian Brahmi inscriptions testify that there were several Brahmins living in different parts of the country. The Mahavamsa also has several references to Brahmins some of whom had influence at the court. Pāṇḍukābhaya is said to have given residences for Jains, Ājivikas and Brahmins. Mv. 10: 101 - 102. S. Gunasingham, Koṇēsvaram, (Peradeniya, 1973) pp. 17-22.

4. The traditional accounts of the origins of the Sinhalese as given in the Pali chronicles are legendary and cannot be considered as history. They are, in several respects, similar to the legends that purport to explain the origins of the 'Indianized' dynastices that held sway over those parts of the South East Asia that came under the influence of Indian culture in the first millenium of the Christian era. Most of such legends trace the ancestry of local ruler from either a Purāṇic sage or an epic hero. No clear evidence of a large scale migration of Indo-Aryans to the island has hitherto emerged. Some trading vessels operating from the Eastern and Western coasts of North India could have touched at some ports in the island and through the contacts established thereby North Indian influences seem to have penetrated into the local society. A thorough assimilation of the Indian cultural tradition by the local population need not imply and did not require a full scale Indo-Aryan migration.

Indian model. Under Mauryan influence, Tissa, the Sinhalese contemporary of Asoka, adopted the practice of royal consecration and the title Dēvanampiya. The Sinhalese monarchy in the Anurādhapura kingdom which existed since the fourth century B.C. and lasted until the Cola conquest towards the close of the tenth century, was supported by an ideology of state power developed and sustained by the Sangha and the court. The unity of the nation and religion and the interdependence between the Sangha and the Court were two ideas behind this conception of state power. Agriculture dependent on artificial irrigation works became the economic foundation of the Sinhalese state. Buddhist institutions were supported and developed with the surplus revenues of the rulers. Religious edifices of monumental proportions were constructed in Anurādhapura and other towns. Art and architecture flourished and developed under Buddhist inspiration and with state support. Anurādhapura, the capital, became the principal centre of religious and cultural activity and it retained its pre-eminence until the rise of Polonnaruwa.

Another important development in the transmission of Indian culture to Sri Lanka, a development that had little in common with the Indo-Aryan tradition, was the spread of the megalithic culture into the island. The introduction of the megalithic culture generally associated with the Dravidians synchronised with early stages in the development of Proto-Sinhalese culture.

Several funerary urns containing human skeletal remains, with artefacts in bronze and iron in and around them have been unearthed in and around Pomparippu. At Pomparippu and other sites in the western littoral the urn-burials do not seem to have had any lithic appendage. The urns discovered at the protohistoric sites in Sri Lanka are remarkably similar to those found at Adichchanallur and other related sites in Tinnevelly in South India where the urn-burial culture was in fact part of a larger megalithic culture. The urn-burials in the Tinnevelly district and elsewhere in South India are generally found at rocky

surfaces in the neighbourhood of a settlement, almost invariably on its southern side. The urns are accompanied by pottery with a black and red polished surface and contain skeletal remains and metallic artefacts.[5] Iron, bronze and gold were the metals that were mostly in use and among them iron predominates. Iron implements included agricultural implements and such weapons like sword, dagger and spear used in hunting and warfare. The megalithic people were therefore an iron using community, partially dependent on agriculture for their subsistence. It could be inferred that the migration of divers and others from the Tāmraparṇi basin in the Pāṇḍya kingdom resulting in their settlements near the pearl banks on the west coast of Sri Lanka had led to the spread of Megalithic culture in the island. Megalithic culture was not restricted to the western littoral but had a wider distribution in the island. Monuments and artefacts that could be described as megalithic are reported to have been discovered at Anurādhapura, Habarana, Padiyagampola, Okanda near Kataragama, and Katiraveḷi in the Batticaloa district.[6] The Megalithic people may have introduced into the island iron and paddy cultivation by means of irrigation.

The two ancient names of Ceylon, Tāmraparṇi and Laṅkā, also testify to the close cultural contacts between her and the Tamil kingdoms in India during the protohistoric period. The river Porunai that flowed across the Tinnevelly region was otherwise called Tāmraparṇi. Kapāṭapuram, the ancient capital of the Pāṇḍyas stood on the mouth of this river.[7] Significantly, the same name was

5. S. P. E. Senaratna, "The later prehistory and protohistory of Ceylon: some preliminary problems", *Journal of the National Museums of Ceylon*, vol. I, pt. 1 (March, 1965) pp. 12 — 13. S. P. E. Senaratna, *Ceylon National Museums Handbook Series 3*, Prehistoric Archaeology in Ceylon, (Colombo, 1969) pp. 30—31.

6. *CJSC*. (G) I (2) pp. 51—52; *ASCAR* for 1957, pp. 11—17, 30—31 *ASCAR* for 1956 p. 15; *CJSC* (G) II, pp. 94—95.

7. Clarence Maloney, 'The Beginnings of Civilization in South India, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, *XXIX* (3) May 1970, p. 613.

applied to the seaport town on the west coast of Sri Lanka. Tradition claims that Tambapaṇṇi was the capital of a kingdom before Upatissagāma and Anurādhapura were established.[8] In course of time, however, the name Tambapaṇṇi was applied to the whole island. It is noteworthy that the river Tāmraparṇi which entered the sea at Cape Comorin and the town of Tambapaṇṇi on the opposite Ceylonese coast were in close proximity and significantly both were in the vicinity of the pearl fishery. This would indicate close cultural connections and parallel developments in both regions. The urn burials found in hundreds of thousands in the Tinnevelly area and in small numbers on the western coast of the island seem to provide evidence of such close links between the Pāṇḍya kingdom and Sri Lanka in ancient times. Lankā was also the name of a town in a principality in Toṇṭaināṭu in south India.[9]

The Tamil population in ancient Sri Lanka was derived largely from four groups of Dravidian settlers, namely warriors, merchants, artisans and seamen who came to the island from pre-Christian times. The **Mahāvaṃsa** claims that a thousand families of craftsmen from the Pāṇḍya kingdom came over to Sri Lanka during the time of Vijaya, the legendary ancestor of the Sinhalese.[10] But little reliance could be placed on this claim because the account of Vijaya as given in the chronicle is a legend. The earliest Tamil conquests of Ceylon seem to have been undertaken by merchant princes. In the two or three centuries prior to the Christian era there were wealthy and influen-

8. Vijaya, the legendary ancestor of the Sinhalese is said to have landed at Tambapaṇṇi. In another context it is claimed that he founded the town of Tambapaṇṇi and ruled from there. *Mv.* (trans.) 6:47; 7:41.

9. The Ciṟupāṇāṟṟuppaṭai refers to Toṉmā Ilaṅkai, Kīḻmāilaṅkai and Naṭunāṭṭu mā Ilaṅkai. Ilaṅkai referred to in ancient Tamil works has been identified as a region in the North Arcot district. Ciṟuppāṇāṟṟuppaṭai, ll. 119–120; V. Kanagasabai, *Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago* (Madras) pp. 27, 29

10. *Mv* 7:57.

tial Tamils in North Ceylon.[11] The Tamil householders' terrace inscription from Anurādhapura which records the construction of a Buddhist monument mentions the names of six Tamils one of whom was the son of a ship captain.[12] Two short inscriptions from Periyapuḷiyaṅkuḷam in the Vavuniya district mention a Tamil trader called Visākha.[13] The Tamils Sēna and Guṭṭhaka, who were the sons of a horse trader, over-powered Suratissa, a brother of Devanampiyatissa and ruled the northern part of Lanka from Anurādhapura for a period of twenty-two years.[14]

In the second century B. C., Elāra, a nobleman from the Cōḷa country, subdued the Sinhalese ruler Asēla and administered a large part of the island from Anurādhapura for a period of forty-four years.[15] Early historical traditions of the Sinhalese represent him as a great and just ruler. He is said to have ruled righteously and with even justice towards friends and foes alike. Elāra was held in high esteem even by his foes on account of the ideals of justice which he cherished. Several anecdotes have been invented to illust-

11. Some of them were merchants, cargo shippers and horse importing (Sirima Maloney, 'The Beginnings of Civilization in South India', *JAS XXXIX* (3), p. 612.

12. According to the epigraph the Terrace of the Tamil house-holders was caused to be made by the Tamil Samana (residing) at Hubarata. On the rock terrace near the inscribed boulder, are engraved the names of six Tamils, Kubira, Tisa, Kubira, Sujata, Naga, Sasata and Karava the Navika. All names are in Prākrit and the name of each one is written above the section of his terrace. Above the highest part of the terrace is written the name of the one referred to as a ship captain. From the adoption of Prākrit names by these Tamils it may be inferred that at least a section of the Tamils living in Sri Lanka imbibed the 'Indo-Aryan' cultural tradition under the influence of Buddhism since pre-christian times. S. Paranavitana, 'Tamil House-holders' Terrace Anurādhapura' *JCBRAS, XXXIV* (1940), pp. 54–56.

13. *EZ*, V (2) p. 242.

14. *Mv*, 21 : 10

15. *ibid*. 21 : 13–14

rate the supra-normal powers he is said to have gained through his benign rule.[16]

Ironically Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's war against Elāra is represented in the Mahāvaṃsa as one of national liberation, a war against the Dravidian marauders under whom Buddhism had suffered. The transition from an attitude of admiration to one of hostility in respect of Elāra in the historical tradition was the work of the politically motivated Mahānāma, a monk of the Mahāvihāra who is said to have lived in the sixth century. Mahānāma produced almost an epic on Duṭṭhagāmaṇi basing his narrative on legends and folklore and as a result the epic of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi became a major theme in traditional history. It served as a model for the authors of the later sections of that chronicle and has profoundly influenced historical thinking in Sri Lanka both ancient and modern. Consequently, Sinhalese - Tamil relations came to be passionately viewed as one of perpetual conflict and confrontation. Such a view is based on selected readings from traditional history and it ignores much of historical and archaeological evidence that weighs against it.

In the time of Vaṭṭhagāmaṇi Abhaya (103, 89-77 B.C.) Tamil chiefs from the Pāṇḍya kingdom conquered the northern parts of the island and administered them for a period of 14 years. Eventually Vaṭṭhagāmaṇi succeeded in regaining his throne.[17]

The history of the Tamils in Sri Lanka during the first millenium of the Christian era, as known from the chronicles, is largely dominated by soldiers and mercenaries. Most of them were brought to the island on the initiative

16. *ibid.* 21 : 19-33

17. Pulahaṭṭha, Bāhiya, Panayamāraka, Piḷayamāraka and Dāṭhika are said to have remained in the island. The other two returned to India. Two among those who stayed in Sri Lanka had names ending in māraka, perhaps from maraṉ, a common Pāṇḍya title. *Mv.* 33 : 39-42, 56-61.

of the Sinhalese rulers while others came with the South Indian conquerers. Recruitment of mercenaries from the neighbouring Tamil kingdoms in India became necessary on account of internal politics and the inadequacy of trained warriors at certain periods in Sri Lanka where the bulk of the population consisted of a fairly prosperous peasantry engaged in the pursuit of agriculture. In Sri Lanka there were no laws regarding succession to the throne; as a result succession was not always regular and peaceful. Disputed succession often developed into full scale wars, especially in the seventh and eighth centuries. Aspirants to royal power and deposed princes had to raise armies from India in order to wage war against their local enemies.

Political conditions and geographical environment favoured the development of a military tradition in South India. In ancient times the Tamil country was politically divided into three kingdoms, namely those of the Cōḻas, the Pāṇḍyas and the Cēras, and a number of independent principalities. Dynastic conflicts and the attempts at territorial expansion often led to wars which had adverse effects on society. Constant vigilance and effective measures for local defence were required on the part of the people to safeguard life and property. The response to such needs was the development of a military tradition which was sustained until the medieval age in the Tamil country. The recruits to the armies of the principal ruling families were drawn mainly from the simple and hardy folk of the hilly regions and the infertile tracts. In course of time such recruits tended to become professional military groups as in the case of the Maḷavar and the Maṟavar of the society depicted in early Tamil literature. Sinhalease rulers could raise armies from such communities in South India whenever required without much difficulty.

In the early Anurādhapura period Ilanāga (A.D. 33—43) and Abhayanāga (231-240) brought Tamil mercenaries from

South India in order to secure the throne.[18] In the fifth century several Pāṇḍya princes occupied Anurādhapura and ruled over a large part of Ceylon for a period of twenty-seven years.[19] In the late Anurādhapura period many Sinhalese rulers brought Dravidian mercenaries from South India. Rival parties in the succession disputes and the civil wars that commenced in the seventh century and lasted for over a hundred years with interruptions, often raised mercenary forces from the Tamil country. The mercenaries who came to the island in the seventh century were almost exclusively Tamil but by the tenth century they included a substantial number of Canarese and Kēraḷas.

Sirināga, a general of Silāmēghavaṇṇa (619—628) organized a rebellion from the northern province with the support of a Tamil army, but the attempt was crushed by the king's forces.[20] The deposed ruler Aggabodhi III (628-639) went to South India and returned with a force of Tamils with whose support he avenged the defeat he had suffered earlier at the hands of Jeṭṭhatissa and regained his throne.[21] Nevertheless, he was dislodged from power once again in a rebellion organized by Dāṭhāsiva.[22] The latter secured power with the help of a Tamil army and assumed the name Dāṭhopatissa (639—650) on his accession.

After the death of Aggabodhi in Rōhaṇa his younger brother, Kassapa, deposed Dāṭhopatissa.[24] The deposed ruler

18. *Mv.* 34 : 26–27, 36:45, 49–51.

19. In relation to the conquest of North Ceylon by the Pāṇḍya princes the *Mv.* says: "The Damila king Pāṇḍu had slain Mittasēna in battle and now having come over from the opposite coast, held sway in Lanka. All the kinsmen of noble families betook themselves to Rōhaṇa, on this side of the stream the Damilas ruled. Cv. 38 : 11–12, 29–34.

20. *Cv.* 44 : 70–71.

21. *Cv.* 44 : 105–117

22 *Cv.* 44 : 125–126

23. *Cv.* 44 : 128

24. *Cv.* 44 : 145

brought a Tamil army from India with a view to re-establishing his power but his attempt ended in disaster.[25] Some years later his nephew Hatthadāṭha brought another Tamil army from India and seized Dappula I and administered the kingdom for a period of eight years (650-658).[26] In the late seventh century, the prince Mānavamma (684-718) brought a Tamil army supplied by the Pallava Narasimhavarman and conquered the island.[27] Thereafter, the Dravidian mercenaries who settled in Rajarata and their descendants continued to be a factor in the politics of the Anurādhapura kingdom. In the tenth century their strength was augmented by fresh arrivals from South India. In the reign of Sēna V (972—982) his general Sēna brought a large number of Tamil soldiers. The bulk of the mercenaries brought by this general stayed behind in the island and in the reign of Mahinda V (982—993) they were found in large numbers at Anurādhapura.[28]

The Tamil mercenaries who were thus brought from time to time in considerable numbers played a decisive role in the succession disputes during the seventh century. Aggabodhi III, Dāṭhāsiva, Hatthadāṭha (615—667) and Mānavamma were able, as we have seen, to secure royal power with their support.[29] Some times they fought in opposite camps. Most of them had no inclination to return to their homeland and settled down in the island and resisted attempts to have them sent away. When the prince Māna attempted to expel them they defied his authority and occupied Anurādhapura. The prince was able to retrieve his position only after concluding a truce with them.[30] Peace and stability at the capital depended to some extent on their loyalty and co-operation. The rulers could not risk their hostility and therefore had to placate them.

25. *Cv.* 44 : 152–153

26. *Cv.* 45 : 19–22.

27. *Cv.* 47 : 33–54.

28. *Cv.* 55 : 2

29. *Cv.* 44 : 105; 125–128; 45:18–22.

30. *Cv.* 45 : 11–15.

When Hatthadāṭha came from India with a Tamil army to wage war against Māna, all Tamils on the route from Mātōṭa to Anurādhapura are said to have joined him. Māna who was unable to face this combination fell from power.[31]

During the late seventh century one of their leaders, Potthakuṭṭha, became so wealthy and powerful as to play the role of a king-maker.[32] In the reign of Aggabodhi IV he held high office and on the king's death he imprisoned Dāṭhāsiva, the **yuvarāja**, and administered the kingdom by setting up two puppet kings, Datta and Hatthadāṭha in succession until Mānavamma conquered the country with the support of a Pallava army.[33] Mahinda V was another ruler who lost his throne on account of the Dravidian soldiers in the army. He was an incompetent monarch who neglected his duties and wasted away his resources. He lost authority over his subjects and was unable to remunerate the soldiers in his army. When the Kēraḷa soldiers threatened to revolt Mahinda fled to Rōhaṇa and consequently lost control over a major part of his kingdom. After his flight the Canarese, Kēraḷa and Sinhalese army leaders are said to have administered all the territories except Rōhaṇa.[34]

The employment of Tamil mercenaries from the seventh century onwards and the activities of South Indian merchant guilds led to the growth of Tamil settlements in Rajarata. Trade was another factor that led to the growth of Tamil settlements in Sri Lanka at different times. The lucrative trade between Sri Lanka and the Tamil kingdoms of South India, in pearls, precious stones, spices, elephants and cloth was largely in the hands of merchants operating from Malabar and the Coromandel. From the ninth century onwards

31. *Cv.* 45 : 18–21.
32. *Cv.* 46 : 19–21.
33. *Cv.* 46 : 39–46.
34. *Cv.* 55 : 3–12.

the South Indian traders became more inclined towards organizing themselves in guilds. Soon such guilds became a vital force in society and in the sea-borne trade of the region.

The Maṇigrāmam (**Vaṇigrāmam**), the most important among such mercantile groups in the Tamil country during the ninth and tenth centuries, had spread its activities over several areas in South India. Merchants who belonged to this group were to be found in the major towns like Uraiyūr Kuṭumpāḷūr, Makōtaippaṭṭinam and Taḷakkāḍ. Inscriptions show that their overseas activities had led to their settlements in Thailand and Sri Lanka. In the middle of the tenth century the market town of Hopitigamu near Mahiyangana had a settlement of the Vaṇigrāma. The Vaṇigrāma was integrated into the local community and it had a say in local affairs.

There were Tamil traders in Anurādhapura during the ninth and tenth centuries. A Tamil inscription set up, in the reign of a ruler called Senāvarman, by the mercantile body called Nāṉku nāṭṭār records the gifts made by Tamil traders to a Buddhist institution named Mākkōtaippaḷḷi. The inscription is said to have been set up by the Tamils of the Nāṉku nāṭu. The latter were an itinerary mercantile body of South Indian origin who came into prominence since the ninth century. They were some times included within the composite and more famous mercantile body called Tisai āyiraṟṟu ainnūṟṟuvar. The Tamils of the Nānku nāṭu seem to have appointed a select group of persons who together with the employees of the Vihāra were entrusted with the task of administering the endowments made by the merchants, presumably for supplying certain requisites for the inmates of the Vihāra. Some of the merchants, if not all, who belonged to the **Nānku nāṭu** seem to have been Buddhists. The name of the institution—Mākkōtaippaḷḷi is interesting and it suggests Kēraḷa connections. Mākkōtai was the epithet of a Cēra King. Besides, there were some localities called Mākkōtai in Keraḷa. It may be